



All Aboard!

COVER Train keeps enlisted education & training on track

by MSgt Ron Brown
HQ AFCESA

In this time of high operations tempo, meeting training requirements is a top concern for both civil engineer commanders and troops. Between maintaining bases and meeting Aerospace Expeditionary Force deployment taskings, there's barely enough time to get our work done, much less focus on accomplishing skills and contingency training.

CE has stepped up to the challenge with the release of COVER Train, an integrated training delivery and management system designed to deliver the growing family of training materials to CE units in a centralized, simple and accessible format.

COVER Train is an acronym for "Contingency,

Operations, and Vocational Engineer Review Training." The "engine" of this train metaphor is the software, and the 13 civil engineer Air Force Specialties (AFSSs) are its "cars." This vehicle provides a quick, flexible and inexpensive way to deliver training materials ("cargo") to the field and track trainees' progress.

From paper to plastic

In recent years, civil engineering has seen the advent of computer-based training to augment both classroom and on-the-job education. The result has been significant cost avoidance, time redemption, and a high-quality product that is convenient, flexible and effective. Accordingly, CE's vision for training promises a shift away from paper, to plastic, and eventually into the world of electrons.

The Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency (AFCESA) has responded by systematically reducing paper use — delivering training materials such as Career Field Education and Training Plans (CFETPs), Air Force Qualification Training Packages (QTPs) and software upgrades to the Certification and Testing Program via the web.

Despite successes with web-based delivery, we concluded that the main thrust of quality training will best be served by starting with stand-alone platforms like CD-ROM and DVD (digital versatile disk). Why? Because we must meet seven key criteria to ensure training excellence:

- Reliability (available on-demand)
- Stability (limited interruption while training)
- Simplicity (easy to train and use)
- Flexibility (adaptable to Air Force and commercial off-the-shelf systems and software)
- Capacity (high volume for video, simulations)
- Clarity (legible, audible and ergonomic to users)
- Accessibility (attainable from multiple locations)

One-stop shopping

AFCESA began developing COVER Train, which is currently under review for Air Force-wide application, in response to the need to consolidate subject and task knowledge training tools. Considering civil engineer education and training's relatively short shelf life (one to three years) and "intra-disciplinary diversity," there was a real need to increase standardization in training and eliminate high printing and distribution costs. The solution was to consolidate all training tools, devices and instruments into one delivery system for "one-stop shopping."

COVER Train will be used to fulfill all training functions except, of course, hands-on training. This includes CFETPs, QTPs and Career Development Courses. It has been designed for use at home, in the field, or on deploy-

ments, and offers Internet links to quickly and efficiently capture the most current publications and updates.

Keeping training on track

The COVER Train package includes an E-Tutor, which will be used by unit education and training managers (UETMs) to train their assistants. Training sessions will also initially be delivered via satellite broadcasts.

The UETMs will load data for themselves and their shop supervisors into the program database. COVER Train disks will then be issued to each shop to be loaded on shop computers. Shop supervisors will load their master task listing (MTL), trainers and certifiers.

Trainees are then loaded by their trainers and are issued a CD or DVD to accomplish training. Trainee records can be updated daily in the shop by way of e-mail or a 3.5-inch floppy disk from their home computer.

Most training, i.e., subject and task knowledge, occurs away from the work center. Trainees will load their own student version of COVER Train on their personal computers and transmit training progress using e-mail and/or a floppy disk.

When COVER Train's Certificate of Networkiness requirements are complete, the unit's server will facilitate the flow of data from the UETMs to the shops and then to each individual trainee.

When a trainee PCSs to their next assignment, their data is transmitted via e-mail and their individual records are backed up on a floppy disk.

Everyone's onboard

COVER Train is intended to interface and exchange data with other management systems such as the Automated Civil Engineer System (ACES). We've teamed with several agencies to ensure COVER Train is "on-track" and in concert with Air Force systems: Air Force Institute for Advanced Distributed Learning, Air Force Personnel Center training officials, Systems Support Group programmers, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics Maintenance Directorate's Maintenance Analysis Training Advisory Group, and Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve Command functional training managers. We've also partnered with the Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications and Information Force Management Division's Force Development Branch to accelerate Air Force Portal delivery. We've begun preparatory steps to link with the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel Training Division's "Personal Trainer," and interface with the Air Force's new personnel data (MilMod) and logistics module (LOGMOD) systems.

So, where are we now?

After 20 months of development and testing, the

Unique functions and characteristics of COVER Train:

- ✍ Auto e-mail information transfer
- ✍ Auto updates for forms, records and documents
- ✍ Digital video
- ✍ Personal organization system

COVER Train program is ready to leave the station bound for civil engineer units. In December 2000, we completed beta testing of COVER Train in 29 locations, compiled and prioritized feedback, and produced version 1.0. In addition, The Civil Engineer, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics, and the major command Civil Engineers have all been briefed on COVER Train and its applications.

The initial release of COVER Train will be delivered to CE units in CD-ROM and DVD formats. DVDs will only be delivered to requesting units who meet predetermined criteria (accessibility to recommended systems, etc.). We will eventually migrate program distribution to the web, as bandwidth increases and we can rely on it as a stable environment.

Only five CE specialties (electrical; structural; heating, ventilation & air conditioning (HVAC/R); pavements & equipment; and utilities) will be "boxcars" on the initial release. Version 2.0, due for release in Spring 2002, will pull all 13 AFSs. Subsequent versions will also be web-enabled to maximize accessibility and ease of use.

For more information on COVER Train contact Mr. Ralph Gruber at DSN 523-6181, or e-mail: ralph.gruber@tyndall.af.mil

MSgt Ron Brown is a civil engineer enlisted career field manager at HQ AFCEA, Tyndall AFB, Fla.



"Sergeant Cyber" is a 3-D, computer-animated character featured in the "E-Tutor," part of the COVER Train package.